CHAPTER TWO

NEW DISCOVERIES AND NOTES ON TWO LOST VILNA SYNAGOGUES – ZAVL'S *KLOYZ* AND ZARECH'E *KLOYZ*

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Introduction

During the seasons of excavation and research of the Vilna Synagogue and *Shulhoyf* Research Project, we were exposed to many aspects of the destroyed Jewish past of Vilna[1], *Yerushaláyim d'Lita*. While working on the remains of the Great Synagogue we would view from the window of our hotel on Gėlių gatvė, the standing shell of a synagogue, one of 160 pre-war synagogues in the city, and one of the extremely few that survived the Holocaust and the destructive years of Soviet rule. As we became acquainted with Vilnius and the many local residents and scholars who showed genuine interest in our research, we had the opportunity to be shown facets of the city that few see, or to be asked to cast an eye on aspects of lost Jewish life that reappear from time to time during archaeological excavations or building renovations. This paper presents two such experiences, the first involving the discovery and divination of a stamp-seal from the synagogue we saw from the hotel window, known as 'Zavl's *Kloyz*' and the second, wall paintings from the walls of the former Zarech'e *Kloyz* in the neighborhood of Užupis, prior to the Shoah a thriving mostly Jewish suburb of Zarech'e, and

[1] Terminology of place and its associated national attributions is an emotive issue in Eastern Europe, no less so in Lithuania, where, prior to the Second World War, a multicultural society of Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, Russians, Belarusians and others lived side by side. Each had their own name for the city. When referring to the Jewish community, the name of their city 'Vilna' or sometimes 'Vilne', as used by that community, is preferred. The Lithuanian name, 'Vilnius' is used when referring to the modern city.

now the gentrified center of bohemian life of modern Vilnius (see Figure 2-1 in the centerfold).

The Stamp-Seal of the *Beth Midrash* of Zavl's *Kloyz*

Zavl's *Kloyz* (Levin 2012: 262-267[2]) was a *beth midrash* and prayer hall established on Gėlių gatvė (meaning Flower Street and formerly known as Blumen Gas – בלומען גאס in Yiddish, Tsvetnoi - Цветной in Russian or Kwiatowa in Polish). Prominent enough to be visited by Sir. Moses Montefiore during his stay in Vilna in 1846 (Steinschneider 1900: 243-244), the *Kloyz*[3] was described in 1921 by Khaykl Lunski, the scholar and chief librarian of the Strashun Library, as "one of the largest and most important *kloyzn*" in the city, where prayers and study are conducted throughout the day and night (Lunski 1921). In 1923 the *kloyz* had 192 regular worshippers, though given its proximity to the train station, the Zavl *Kloyz* was often frequented by travelers prior to embarking on, or returned from, a journey.

The original *kloyz* was built of wood in the courtyard of the wealthy merchant, Shmuel Zanvil bar Pesaḥ Germaize (שמואל זנוויל ב"ר פסח גערמייזה), known as Reb Zavl. After burning down in 1817, Zavl Germaize and his son-in-law, David Levinsohn, donated the courtyard set between Pylimo (זאַוולנע, Zawalna, Zavalna - Завалъная), Sodų (סאַדווע, Sadowa, Sadovaia - Садовая) and Gėlių streets to the congregants, who in return guaranteed to build a new *beth midrash* and *kloyz* on the site (Steinschneider 1900: 242-244).[4] The new structure (Figures 2-2 and 2-3) went through a number of phases, most notably in the years 1893 and 1897, under guidance of the architect Aleksei Polozov, who designed a new prayer house with a prominent apse for the *Aron Kodesh* (Torah Ark) set between double flanking windows, also adding elaborate gates to the courtyard.

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[2] Levin (2012: 260-267) provides comprehensive primary sources for the history and architecture of Zavl's *Kloyz*.

[3] Different names were used for synagogues in eastern Europe. The Yiddish term *kloyz* (pl., *kloyzn*) refers to a small prayer house also used as a place of study for mature scholars, often financed by a wealthy benefactor or professional guild. In Vilna it usually indicated a prayer house in the Mitnaged tradition, while the name *shtibl* would usually denote a similar institution of the Ḥasidic school.

[4] Steinschneider presents the letter of donation of the plot for building the Bet Midrash and Kloyz, indicating the structure will be known as 'Zavl's Shul' (זאבל'ס שול), in place of a grave stone for Shmuel Zanvil bar Pesaḥ Germaize. The letter also sets conditions for the donation and guarantees the reciting of prayers on the Memorial Day.



Figure 2-2 - The Façade of Zavl's *Kloyz* (Credit: Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

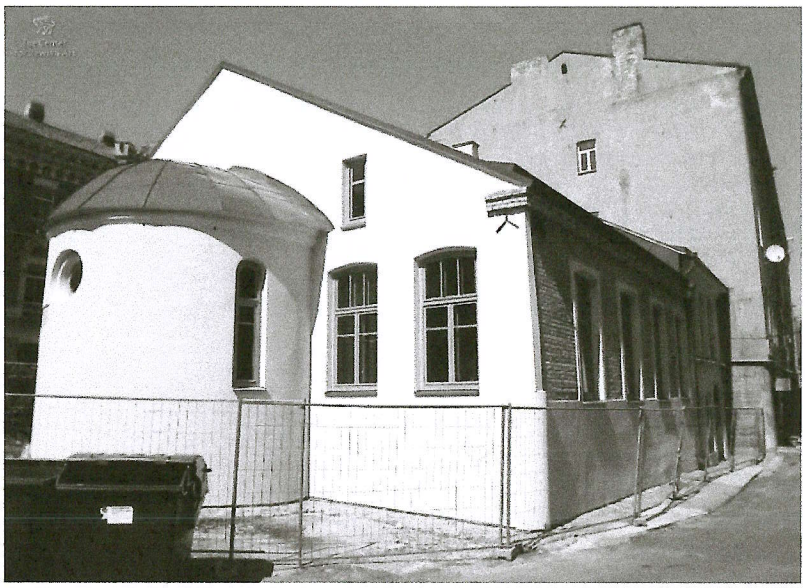


Figure 2-3 - The protruding alcove built for the Aron Kodesh of Zavl's *Kloyz* (Credit: Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

The plastered brick building was rectangular with a gabled roof, with four tall side windows with segmented arches set high above the floor on each side of the main prayer hall. The hall was covered with a large octagonal internal cupola (see Figure 2-4 in the centerfold). Two staircases led to the women's section, clearly visible from the street through a row of three windows with semicircular arches. It was set in a gallery that opened to the

back of the central prayer hall, while below it the entrance vestibule included a large room, presumably used for religious study. Based on mid-20th century descriptions, the interior was covered with paintings of the Twelve Tribes of Israel and the signs of the zodiac, and the cupola's interior bore images of the heavens, the sun, moon and stars.

During Soviet times the former *kloyz* was converted into a bakery, which ensured its partial survival. Given that so few synagogues bridged the dark times from 1940 to the 1990s, the Lithuanian Jewish Community[5] has decided in recent years to renovate the structure to its former glory as an exhibition space. Slow renovation works to shore up the walls and restore interior have exposed the stucco moldings and colorful stenciled wall paintings of Stars of David in the women's gallery; painted pilasters and prayer texts (see Figure 2-5 in the centerfold)[6] in the main hall and a terrazzo floor

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[5] See for example https://www.lzb.lt/en/2017/10/04/zavl-shul-opens-doors-to-public-briefly/.

[6] High up, on the wall of the main prayer hall, are painted remaining sections of the prayer recited during the removal of the Torah scrolls from the Aron Kodesh (Ark) for reading on the morning of Yom Kippur after the reciting of the 'Thirteen Attributes of Mercy' (י"ג מידות הרחמים) from Exodus 34:6–7, which define the divine attributes through which the world is governed by God. This inscription is not uncommon and Shadmi (2011: 74-75, 270) catalogues 18 similar painted wall inscriptions in eastern European synagogues. The text on the wall, in *Nusach Sefard*, is as follows (see the English translation in the footnote on the next page):

(רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, מִלֹּא מִשְׁאֲלוֹתַי לְטוֹבָה;
וְהָפֵק רְצוֹנִי וְתֵן שְׁאֵלָתִי וּמְחוֹל לִי עַל כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתַי וְעַל כָּל)
עֲוֹנוֹת אַנְשֵׁי בֵיתִי, מִתְּחִילָה בְּחֶסֶד, מִתְּחִילָה בְּרַחֲמִים
וְטַהֲרֵנִי מֵחַטָּאַי וּמֵעֲוֹנַי וּמִפְּשָׁעַי, וְזָכְרֵנִי בְּזִכָּרוֹן טוֹב לְפָנֶיךָ
וּפָקְדֵנִי בִּפְקוּדַּת יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים: וְזָכְרֵנִי לְחַיִּים
טוֹבִים וּלְשָׁלוֹם וּפַרְנָסָה טוֹבָה וְכַלְכָּלָה:
וְלֶחֶם לֶאֱכוֹל וּבֶגֶד לְלָבוּשׁ: וְעוֹשֶׁר
וְכָבוֹד וַאֲרִיכַת יָמִים בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ ,
וְשֵׂכֶל וּבִינָה לְהָבִין וּלְהַשְׂכִּיל עֻמְקֵי סוֹדוֹתֶיהָ,
וְהָפֵק רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל מַכְאוֹבֵינוּ. וּתְבָרֵךְ
אֶת כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ. וּתְגַזּוֹר עָלֵינוּ גְּזֵרוֹת טוֹבוֹת
יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנֶחָמוֹת: וּתְבַטֵּל מֵעָלֵינוּ כָּל גְּזֵרוֹת
קָשׁוֹת וְרָעוֹת, וְתֵן בְּלֵב מַלְכוּת וְיוֹעֲצָיו וְשָׂרָיו
עָלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה. אָמֵן וְכֵן יְהִי רָצוֹן:

that includes red and black starburst designs very similar to those found during the excavation of the floor of the Great Synagogue (Seligman 2020: 3, 6).

While the background discussion is well known, this would change in April 2022, when Andrius Šležas[7], a Lithuanian archaeologist who had previously excavated at the Vingrių springs (see the chapter on the 'Bathhouse and *Miqva'ot* (Ritual Baths) of the Great Synagogue of Vilna'), contacted this author about a find from a small excavation he was conducting for the laying of infrastructure near the former stables of no. 57 Pylimo gatvė, close to one of the entrances to the courtyard that had belonged to Shmuel Zanvil bar Pesaḥ Germaize. Andrius sent me a photograph of a bronze seal with reversed Hebrew lettering measuring 6 x 2 centimeters (see Figures 2-6 and 2-7 in the centerfold). The letters were set in a frame marked out with rows of small triangles.

Understanding of the mirrored inscription seal, written in a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic using multiple esoteric rabbinic abbreviations, proved to be a challenge.[8] The inscription reads as follows:

חותם דחברי בי רב
דבהמד"ש של רז ורד
(*Ḥotam d'Ḥevrei bi rav d'Bet Ha-Midrash L'Raz ve'Rad*)

English translation:
(Lord of the universe, fulfill our petitions for happiness;
grant our request and graciously pardon all our iniquities,)
all the iniquities of our families.
Cleanse us from our sins and transgressions; remember us generously;
be mindful of us and mercifully save us. Remember us for a long and happy life
of peace and well-being; give us food to eat and clothes to wear, wealth
and length of days, to meditate in thy Torah and to perform its precepts;
endow us with intelligence to understand its deep mysteries,
send healing for all our sorrows and bless
all our work. Ordain for us good laws of deliverance and
comfort, and abolish all evil decrees against us. Inspire the leaders of our government
to be good to us. Amen, may this be thy will.

[7] I thank Andrius Šležas of the Kultūros vertybių paieška for contacting me about this find and allowing me to present it here. The final report of the excavation at Pylimo gatvė will be published in the journal, 'Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje'.

[8] I thank Prof. Mordachai Zalkin of Ben Gurion in the Negev University and Dr. Vladimir Levin of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for their aid in deciphering the inscription.

This inscription is best translated as follows, "The seal of the members of the study group of the Beth Midrash of Reb Zavl and Reb David."

The Aramaic term בי רב (*bi rav*) is taken from the *Ḥagigah* tractate of the Talmud (Talmud - Mas. Chagigah 5b)[9], meaning literally the house of the rabbi, but relating here to a study hall, such as that established at Zavl's *Kloyz*. So, the combination, חברי בי רב - *Ḥevrei bi rav* can be interpreted both as a Yeshiva student or as members of a study group.

The Hebrew abbreviation דבהמד"ש(*d'BHMDSh*) is simply a reduction of the words 'of the Beth Midrash', the small religious study hall, that was most likely located in the room below the women's gallery.

The words של רז ורד (*shel Raz veRad*) proved the most elusive, as these were specific to the place where the seal was discovered. Eventually the two abbreviations became obvious, for these refer back to the two philanthropists who donated the plot for building the *kloyz*. *Raz* was the contraction of Reb[10] Zavl (Shmuel Zanvil Germaize), while *Rad* were that of his son-in-law, Reb David (Levinsohn).

This chance find is the seal of the religious study group that operated in the Bet Midrash of the Zavl *Kloyz*, probably up until the closure of Jewish religious institutions during the first Soviet occupation of eastern Poland in 1940. The *Kloyz* had a complex of subsidiary properties around it which probably included the building on Pylimo g. 57. The seal may have come from an office of the study group or even may have belonged to a member of the study group who lived there. Similar seals are mostly known from their inked stamps found on thousands of books, documents and letters. The known stamps demonstrate their frequent use by communal organizations, religious institutions and private individuals, usually to identify ownership or indicate a donation of a book to a library or institution (Katz 2008: 8). Many of the stamps presented by Katz originate from synagogues and prayer houses during the interbellum, and the seal from Zavl's Kloyz joins that collection.[11] The textural formulation of seals from stamps belonging

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[9] See: Talmud Bavli, *Ḥagigah* tractate 5b - רב אידי אבוה דרבי יעקב בר אידי הוה רגיל דהוה אזיל תלתא ירחי באורחא וחד יומא בבי רב והוו קרו ליה רבנן בר בי רב (Rav Idi, father of Rabbi Ya'akov bar Idi, would travel three months to reach the study hall and would immediately travel back again to arrive home for the Sukkot.

[10] Reb, often incorrectly translated Rabbi, is an honourific term equivalent to 'Mr'.

[11] In his book, Katz (2008) presents stamps from the Vilna Gaon's *Kloyz*, Strashun *Kloyz*, Ḥabad *Shtibl*, Or Torah *Kloyz*, Ramailes Yeshiva, Leather merchants *Kloyz*, Gemilat Ḥesed *Kloyz*. Many more can be found in the pages of Irina Guzenberg's book, 'Vilnius: Traces of the Jerusalem of Lithuania' (2021).

to the religious institutions, including that presented here was similar, "Seal of the Beth Midrash / Kloyz / Synagogue etc. of (name of the institution)."

Wall Paintings from the Zarech'e *Kloyz*

Though Jewish residence had been restricted by the privilege of Władysław IV Vasa (Klausner 1935: 9, 14; Levin 2012: 24) to the streets close to the Great Synagogue, Jews would spread out throughout Vilna, especially after restrictions were formally lifted in 1783. One of the neighborhoods that soon developed a large Jewish population was Zarech'e, now known as Užupis (Zarzecza – Polish, Заречье – Russian), situated inside a loop of the Vilnia river to the east of the historic city center. The first known synagogue in the area was established as early as 1814 by Israel Ginzburg, nicknamed the Zarecher (זאַרעציער) after the place of his abode (Steinschneider 1900: 49-51; Levin 2012: 274-275).[12] That synagogue was destroyed by a flood of the Vilnia river and replaced by a new structure in 1841, high-up above the river at present-day no. 36 Užupio Street. Just as Zavl's *Kloyz* was notable as the traveler's synagogue because of its proximity to the train station, the Zarech'e synagogue became famous because of its position on the road leading eastwards from the city center to the large Zarech'e cemetery as a place where burial processions would stop to eulogise the deceased. Between 1840 to 1849 the *kloyz* was also well known as the spiritual home and yeshiva of Rabbi Israel Lipkin of Salant, known as 'Israel Salanter,[13]

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[12] See notes 95-102 for these pages in Levin, 2012 for full documentation.

[13] The synagogue is described by Ḥaim Grade in *Di Agune* (The Agunah), where he notes that 'cobwebbed' covered books from the time of Rabbi Israel Salanter were kept in a room beside the main prayer hall. (Grade 1974: 39, 55)

אַמאָל איז זאַרעטשער קלויז פול געווען מיט בני'תורה. ר' ישראל סאַלאַנטער האָט דאָ אַ ישיבה געפירט און אַלע בענק זיינען טאָג און נאַכט באַזעצט געווען מיט בחורים, מיט יונגעלייט און עלטערע בעליי בתים... דער בית-מדרש פוס" טעוועט, אין חדר-שני שטייען די אַלמערס ספרים פאַרוועבט מיט שפּינוועבס .... (Grade 1961 : 38)

(Once upon a time the Zaretche *shul* used to be crowded with Torah scholars. Reb Israel Salanter led a yeshiva here day and night and all the benches were packed with students of all ages... (Now) The study-room is desolate, and the bookcase in the little library is covered with cobwebs (Grade 1974: 39).)

נאָך מעריב איז ער געבליבן אין בית-מדרש נאָך לענגער וי פריער, ווען דער עולם איז אַוועק, איז ער אַריינגעגאַנגען אין חדר-שני, פול מיט ספרים נאָך פון ר' ישראל סאַלאַנטערס צייטן, און איז געקראָכן אויף אַ לייטערל מיט אַן אָנגעצונדן ליכט אין דער האַנט. ער האָט אַראָפּגענומען גרויסע פאַרשטוייבטע ספרים און אין זיי אַריינגעקוקט שעהלאַנג. דאָס זיינען געווען שאלות-ותשובות ועגן עגונות.

(footnote continued on next page) (Grade 1961: 57).

the founder of the Musar school of Jewish thought, where he too was visited by Sir Moses Montefiore in 1846 (Steinschneider 1900: 129).

The Zarech'e *kloyz* was a one-story brick building, set back from the street, with twelve windows (Figure 2-8, Figures 2-9 and Figure 2-10). The original floor level was lower than today and was paved with red bricks. In the middle of the eastern wall was a niche (1) which once contained the Aron Kodesh (Torah ark). The sides of the surviving base of Ark were painted red. At the center of the main prayer hall were the remains of the Bimah (2), with four metal columns at the corners, originally supporting the ceiling. A women's section (3) was added in 1891 on the north side of the prayer hall, with open arches set between the two (Figure 2-11). The abandoned synagogue became an apartment after WWII and in 2008 was converted into a luxurious residence with views over the Vilnia river, during which its façade was restored and the plaster stripped to reveal fragments of stucco moldings, including plaster pilasters with Ionic capitals surrounding the Aron Kodesh, a painted frieze with fine dentils, strapwork, acanthus leaves, tendrils, garlands, medallions, a chalice and wall paintings (see Figure 2-12 in the centerfold). The walls seem originally to have been painted blue with stenciling of flowers noticeable in multiple locations in the structure. Today, after drastic interior and exterior remodeling, nothing suggests the building's original function, but additional treatment of the walls exposed further wall paintings discussed here.

(After the evening service (*Ma'ariv*), Reb David remained in the *shul* even longer than usual. When the congregation had departed, he went into the adjoining library, still full of books from Rabbi Israel Salanter's time. With a candle in hand, he climbed up a little ladder and removed huge dusty tomes that are devoted to the responsa, concerning *agunahs*, and studied them for hours on end (Grade 1974: 5).



Figure 2-8 - The Zarech'e *Kloyz* in the Užupis neighborhood (Credit: Jon Seligman).

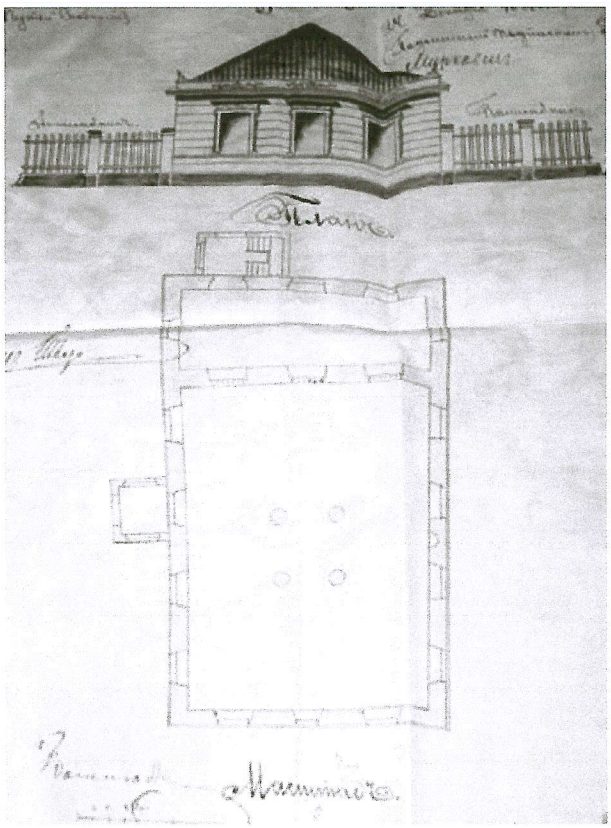


Figure 2-9 - Building plan for the Zarech'e *Kloyz*: southern façade and ground plan, 1841 (Credit: Levin 2012: fig.100; LVIA, F. 937, Ap. 1, B. 3218, L. 8).

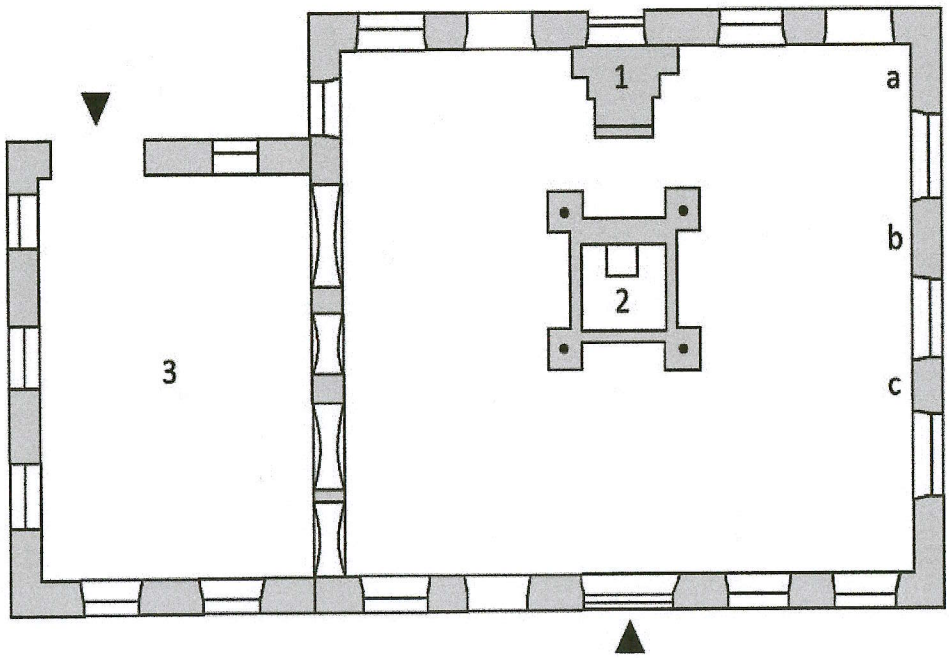


Figure 2-10 - Annotated plan for the Zarech'e *Kloyz*: 1 – Aron Kodesh (Torah Ark); 2 – *Bimah*; 3 – *Ezrat Nashim* (Women's gallery); a – Thirteen Tenets of Faith; b – Menorah; c – *HaNoten Tsua'* prayer.

On a visit to the building[14], three wall paintings were visible, divided by the three windows facing the street and numbered in the plan 'a' to 'c' on (see Figure 2-12 in the centerfold). All the paintings seem to be contemporary and should be dated to the middle of the 19th century, to the reign of Tzar Nikolai I, between construction of the building in 1841 till the passing of the Tzar in 1855.[15]

[14] I thank the owners of the house on 36 Užupio Street, Darius Žakaitis and Aurelija Razmarataite-Žakaitiene, for allowing me to document the remains of the former Zarech'e *Kloyz* and Ilya Lempert for first showing me the building in 2016. The synagogue lost its original function after the Shoah. Initially subdivided into apartments, the building was gutted in 2006 during which the interior was documented by Dalia Kazlauskienė, Ričardas Račinskas and Neringa Šarkauskaitė and a small excavation was conducted by Justina Ramanauskienė (2007) during which the base of the *Bimah* was uncovered. Later, the Žakaitis family conducted extensive changes that subdivided the space. Removal of the late 20th century plaster exposed the wall paintings described here.

[15] For the detailed research on the development of wall inscriptions in the synagogues of eastern Europe see Shadmi 2011.



Figure 2-11 – The former women's gallery of the Zarech'e *Kloyz*. Note the arched openings to the main prayer hall behind the sofa (Credit: Jon Seligman).

In the corner (a), closest to the *Aron Kodesh* (1) was a large painted inscription of the 'Thirteen Tenets of Faith' (י"ג עיקרי האמונה) as formulated in the Maimonides' introductory commentary on the Sanhedrin treatise of the Mishna (see Figure 2-13 in the centerfold). The inscription, of 20 lines in black letters, is painted on a white background set inside a red frame. The panel seems to cover an earlier wall painting of which only beige lines remain. The bottom three lines are not part of the tenets, the meaning remaining unclear. The last line is a date, of which only the day and month, the 10th Tammuz, is extant. Because of lack of space, the inscription includes repeated use of the contraction of the words אני מאמן באמונה שלמה (I believe with perfect faith) to אֲמֻבְּשׁ, the abbreviation indicated by the addition of a caron above the letter.

The 'Thirteen Tenets of Faith' as painted on the wall of the Zarech'e synagogue appear as follows:

א. אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא בּוֹרֵא וּמַנְהִיג
לְכָל הַבְּרוּאִים. וְהוּא לְבַדּוֹ עָשָׂה וְעוֹשֶׂה וְיַעֲשֶׂה לְכָל הַמַּעֲשִׂים:

ב. אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא יָחִיד וְאֵין יְחִידוּת
כָּמוֹהוּ בְּשׁוּם פָּנִים. וְהוּא לְבַדּוֹ אֱלֹהֵינוּ. הָיָה הֹוֶה וְיִהְיֶה:

ג. אֲמֻבְּשׁ. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵ' יִת'שׁ' אֵינוֹ גוּף. וְלֹא יַשִּׂיגוּהוּ מַשִּׂיגֵי הַגּוּף. וְאֵין לוֹ שׁוּם דְּמְיוֹן כְּלָל:

ד. אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא רִאשׁוֹן וְהוּא אַחֲרוֹן:

ה. אֲמִבְּשׁ. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא י ית'ש' לוֹ לְבַדּוֹ רָאוּי לְהִתְפַּלֵּל. וְאֵין רָאוּי לְהִתְפַּלֵּל לְזוּלָתוֹ:
ו. אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁכָּל דִּבְרֵי נְבִיאִים אֱמֶת:
ז. אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁנְּבוּאַת מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם הָיְתָה
אֱמִתִּית. וְשֶׁהוּא הָיָה אָב לַנְּבִיאִים. לְקוֹדְמִים לְפָנָיו וְלַבָּאִים אַחֲרָיו:
ח. אֲמִבְּשׁ. שֶׁכָּל הַתּוֹרָה הַמְּצוּיָה עַתָּה בְּיָדֵינוּ הִיא הַנְּתוּנָה לְמֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם:
ט. אֲמִבְּשׁ. שֶׁזֹּאת הַתּוֹרָה לֹא תִהֵא מֻחְלֶפֶת וְלֹא תִהֵא תוֹרָה אַחֶרֶת מֵאֵת הַבּוֹרֵא יִתְּשׁ:
י. אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ יוֹדֵעַ כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה בְנֵי
אָדָם וְכָל מַחְשְׁבוֹתָם. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר הַיֹּצֵר יַחַד לִבָּם הַמֵּבִין אֶל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:
יא. אֲמִבְּשׁ. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְּשׁ שְׁמוֹ גּוֹמֵל טוֹב לְשׁוֹמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו וּמַעֲנִישׁ לְעוֹבְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו:
יב. אֲמִבְּשׁ. בְּבִיאַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ. וְאַף עַל פִּי שֶׁיִּתְמַהְמֵהַּ. עִם כָּל זֶה אֲחַכֶּה לּוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם שֶׁיָּבוֹא:
יג. אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁתִּהְיֶה תְּחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים בְּעֵת שֶׁיַּעֲלֶה רָצוֹן
מֵאֵת הַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ וְיִתְעַלֶּה זִכְרוֹ לָעַד וּלְנֵצַח נְצָחִים:

The translation of this inscription of the 'Thirteen Tenets of Faith' is:

1. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created; He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is One, and that there is no unity in any manner like His, and that He alone is our God, who was, and is, and will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, has no body, and that He is free from all the properties of matter, and that there can be no (physical) comparison to Him whatsoever.
4. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is the first and the last.
5. I believe with perfect faith that to the Creator, blessed be His Name, and to Him alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides Him.
6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.
7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both those who preceded him and those who followed him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that is now in our possession is the same that was given to Moses our teacher, peace be upon him.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be exchanged, and that there will never be any other Torah from the Creator, blessed be His Name.
10. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, knows all the deeds of human beings and all their thoughts, as it is written, "Who fashioned the hearts of them all, who comprehends all their actions" (Psalm 33:15).

11. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, rewards those who keep His commandments and punishes those that transgress them.
12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; and even though he may tarry, nonetheless, I wait every day for his coming.
13. I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, blessed be His name, and His mention shall be exalted for ever and ever.

This painting of the Tenets of Faith on the wall of the synagogue may well be unique in Lithuania, and does not appear in the usual repertoire of wall synagogue inscriptions. A single example is known in eastern Galicia from the 18-19th century synagogue of Żydaczów (Zidichov in Yiddish, now Zhydachiv, Ukraine) (Shadmi 2011: 157, note 37). In light of Israel Salanter's residency in the Zarech'e *Kloyz*, it could be suggested that the inclusion of this specific passage is connected to the principles of the Musar movement, though this requires additional research.

The second panel (b), set between two windows, is of an elaborate brass seven-branched Menorah, colored with yellow and brown paint, and set on three legs (see Figure 2-14 in the centerfold). It stands on a painted table. The branches of the Menorah are decorated with 'buds and blossoms' (*kaftor ve-feraḥ*), as stipulated in verse 25:33 of Exodus. Flames flicker from the wicks on each candle stick. Obviously, the Menorah, the symbol of the Jewish people since Biblical times, is a common liturgical motif in many synagogues, including numerous examples in Lithuania (Niunkaitė Račiūnienė 2011: 244-249; Yaniv 2017: 178-195).

The final extant panel (c), again set between two windows, is painted in two sections surrounded by a wide red frame (see Figure 2-15 in the centerfold). The sections contain an identical prayer, known as *Hanoten Teshua'* (May he that giveth salvation unto kings), in Hebrew and Russian, blessing the governance of the Tsar. Above the frame, against the background of the blue paint that covered the walls of the synagogue, is a large image, colored in light-brown and white, of the heraldic emblem of imperial Russia, a double headed eagle surmounted by a crown, grasping in its talons, the royal orb and scepter.

Though most of the words of the prayer are difficult to determine, especially in the Russian text, the emphasized name of the Tsar is marked out in large red lettering to differentiate from the black letters used for the reminder of the text. Surprisingly, the Tsar registered is not the same in the

Hebrew and in the Russian. The Tsar noted in Russian is Aleksándr II Nikoláyevich (Александр Николаиевич)[16] who ruled Russia from 1855 until his assassination in 1881. However, in the Yiddish spelling used for the name listed in the Hebrew text, the name given is Nikolai Pavlovich (ניקאלאיי פאוולעוויטש), referring to Tsar Nicholas I, the father of Alexander II, who ruled from 1825 to 1855. The very fact that this prayer was painted on the wall in both Russian and Hebrew shows that the audience of its display, beyond the congregants, were first and foremost visiting officials, who, without knowledge of Hebrew, would not notice that the community had not bothered to replace the name of Tsar Nicholas I on his passing to his son and successor. This inconsistency in the names places the date of the original painting prior to 1855, and quite possibly concurrent with the construction of the building in 1841, with a correction of the name of the Tsar only in the Russian text from the time of the succession or coronation of Aleksándr II in 1855-6.

The Hebrew text of the prayer on the wall is adjusted by gender and enumerated for the grammar suitable for a single male individual, contrasting prayers tailored for a female monarch or multiple royal family members. The first word, *HaNoten* (הנותן), and the name, Nikolai Pavlovich (ניקאלאיי פאוולעוויטש), are emboldened, enlarged, colored and centered to make them stand out from the remainder of the text. The final five lines of the most likely original 23 are missing, and the stanzas are divided up to fit the panel as follows:

הַנּוֹתֵן
תְּשׁוּעָה לַמְּלָכִים: וּמֶמְשָׁלָה
לַנְּסִיכִים וּמַלְכוּתוֹ מַלְכוּת
כָּל עוֹלָמִים: הַפּוֹצֶה אֶת דָּוִד
עַבְדּוֹ מֵחֶרֶב רָעָה. הַנּוֹתֵן בַּיָּם
דֶּרֶךְ וּבְמַיִם עַזִּים נְתִיבָה .
הוּא יְבָרֵךְ וְיִשְׁמוֹר וְיִנְצוֹר
וַיַּעֲזוֹר. וִירוֹמֵם וְיַגְדִּיל. וְיִנַּשֵּׂא
לְמַעְלָה. אֶת לַאֲדוֹנֵנוּ הַקֵּיסָר
ניקאלאיי
פאוולעוויטש
יר"ה (יָרוּם הוֹדָם). מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים
בְּרַחֲמָיו יְחַיֵּהוּ וְיִשְׁמָרֵהוּ
וּמִכָּל־צָרָה וְיָגוֹן וָנֶזֶק יַצִּילֵהוּ:

[16] The incorrect spelling of the name Николаиевич, rather than Никола́евич, may well be a mistake.

וַיַּדְבֵּר עַמִּים תַּחַת רַגְלָיו
וַיַּפִּיל שׂוֹנְאָיו לְפָנָיו וּבְכֹל
אֲשֶׁר יִפְנֶה יַצְלִיחַ: מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי
הַמְּלָכִים בְּרַחֲמָיו יִתֵּן בְּלִבּוֹ
(וּבְלֵב כָּל־יוֹעָצָיו וְשָׂרָיו רַחֲמָנוּת
לַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹבָה עִמָּנוּ וְעִם כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל .
בְּיָמָיו וּבְיָמֵינוּ תִּוָּשַׁע יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל
יִשְׁכֹּן לָבֶטַח וּבָא לְצִיּוֹן גּוֹאֵל:
וְכֵן יְהִי רָצוֹן, וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

The translation of this text to English (based on Marx 2014: 51-52):

He that giveth
salvation unto kings, and dominion
unto princes – And whose kingdom is an
eternal kingdom – the One who delivers David
his servant from an evil sword. Who opens a way in the sea,
and a path through the mighty water:
may he bless, keep, protect,
assist, exalt, and raise up
our most gracious Sovereign Tsar
Nikolai
Pavlovich
May the supreme King of kings,
through his infinite mercy, grant him life, and guard him
from all manner of trouble, sorrow and harm.
May he make his enemies be struck down before him;
and in whatsoever he undertaketh may he prosper.
May the supreme King of kings
through his infinite mercy, inspire him,
and all his councilors and ministers, with mercy
and benevolence towards us and all Israel.
In their days and in our ours, may Judah be saved, and Israel
dwell in safety and may the Redeemer come unto Zion.
may such be thy divine will, and let us say, Amen.

This prayer, '*Hanoten Teshua'*, is a well-known blessing for government and sympathetic governance from the incumbent gentile authorities, titled by its first two words. The origins of this prayer can be traced back to the 16th century Sephardic communities in Amsterdam and in the Ottoman empire, later also gaining acceptance in Ashkenazic liturgy (Schwartz

1986). The prayer, which is recited each Sabbath morning, draws from the words of Psalms 144:10 (He that giveth salvation unto kings - הַנּוֹתֵן תְּשׁוּעָה לַמְּלָכִים), Isaiah 43:16 and Jerimiah 23:6, inserting the sitting monarch, royal family members or other figure heads as appropriate. *Siddurim* (prayer books) printed from a variety of times, but especially from the 19th century till today, and from a variety of places catalogue the list of the monarchs of Europe, the Ottoman empire and later heads of state from around the world, while the prayer was often also painted on the wall or attached on a sign of the synagogue as a public display of loyalty and national allegiance.[17] Thus, *Hanoten Teshua'* prayer found its place in a *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur maḥzor*, printed in Vilna in 1876 (*Maḥzor* 1876) for Tsar Aleksándr II Nikoláyevich (Figure 2-16) and the royal family and a bilingual sign displayed at the front in the Great Synagogue of Vilna that glorifies the name of Tsar Nikolai II Alexandrovich and his family (Figure 2-17).

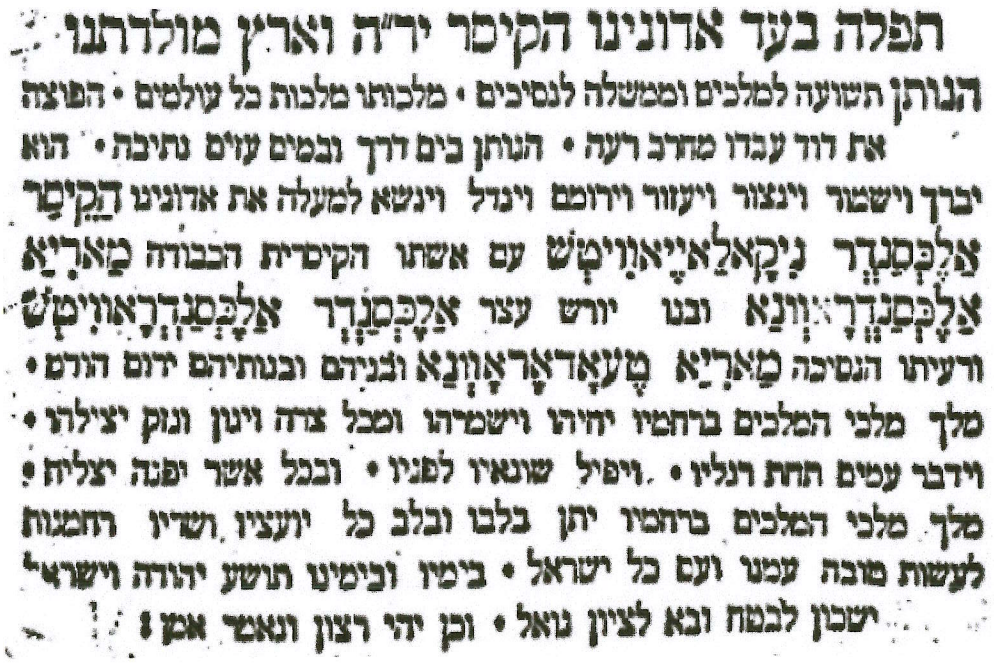

תפלה בעד אדונינו הקיסר יר"ה ואדון מולדתנו
הנותן תשועה למלכים וממשלה לנסיכים • מלכותו מלכות כל עולמים • הפוצה
את דוד עבדו מחרב רעה • הנותן בים דרך ובמים עזים נתיבה • הוא
יברך וישמור וינצור ויעזור וירומם וינדל וינשא למעלה את אדונינו הַקֵּיסָר
אֲלֶכְּסַנְדֶר נִיקָאלַאייֶעוִויטְשׁ עם אשתו הקיסרית הגבורה מַאריָא
אֲלֶכְּסַנְדְרָאוונָא ובנו יורש עצר אֲלֶכְּסַנְדֶר אֲלֶכְּסַנְדְרָאוויטְשׁ
ודעיתו הנסיכה מַאריָא טָעאדאָראָוונָא ובניהם ובנותיהם ידום הודם •
מלך מלכי המלכים ברחמיו יחיתו וישמיתו ומכל צרה ויגן ונוק יצילתו •
וידבר עמים תחת ידנו • ויפיל שונאיו לפניו • ובכל אשר יפנה יצליח •
מלך מלכי המלכים ברחמיו יתן בלבו ובלב כל יועציו ושריו רחמנות
לעשות טובה עמנו ועם כל ישראל • בימיו ובימינו תושע יהודה וישראל
ישכון לבטח ובא לציון גואל • וכן יהי רצון ונאמר אמן

Figure 2-16 - The *Hanoten Teshua'* prayer from a *maḥzor* printed in Vilna, 1876.

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[17] The *Hanoten Teshua'* prayer for Alexander III is found on a sign in the synagogue in Wołpa, Belarus (Rodov 2004: 86, fig. 8, 122), painted on the wall of the synagogue in Inowłodzu, Poland (see: https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/node/84932) and in Bechhofen and Unterlimpurg in southern Germany (Shadmi 2011: 69-70, 266). The same prayer, dedicated to Tsar Nicholas II was hung on a sign in the Great Synagogue of Vilna. Balaban (1929: 97-98) notes that similar signs were frequently hung from synagogue walls in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, specifically citing such a sign dedicated to King Jan II Kazimierz Waza (1648 – 1668) from Cracow.

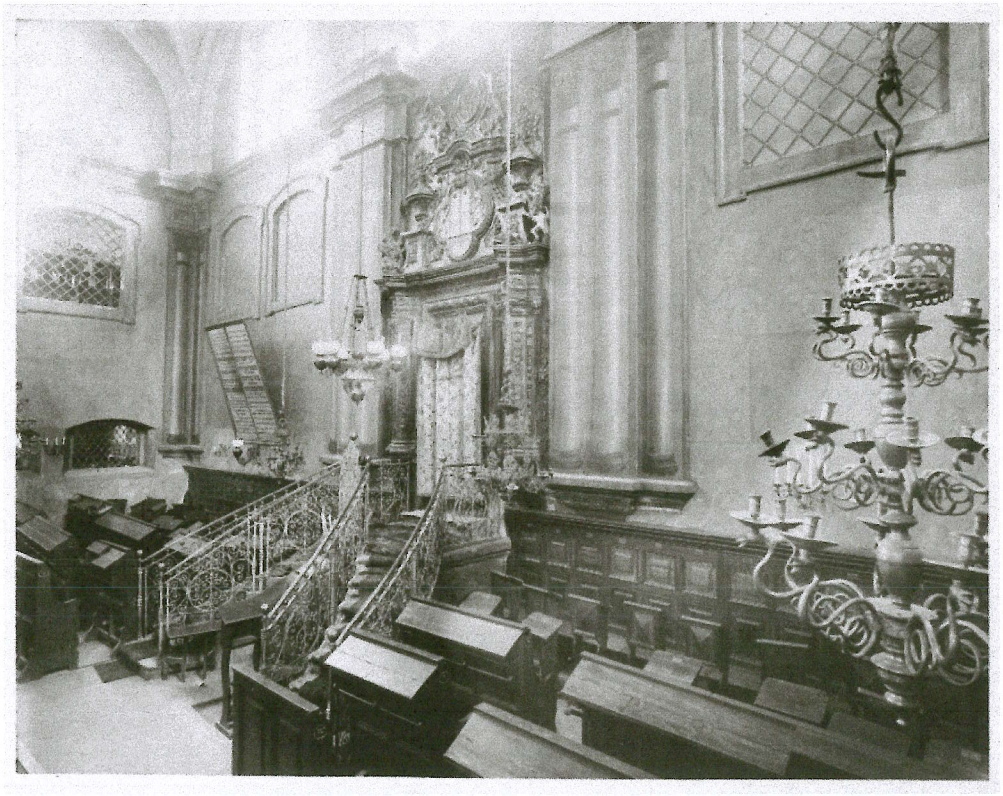


Figure 2-17 - The *Hanoten Teshua'* prayer on a sign hung on the front wall of the Great Synagogue of Vilna extols the governance of Tsar Nicholas II, who reigned from 1894 until the Russian revolution and his abdication in 1917. The names listed are Nikolai Alexandrovich (ניקאליי אלכסדראוויטש - Никола́й Алекса́ндрович); his wife, Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna (אלקסנדרא טעאדאראוונא -Александра Фёдоровна); the Queen Mother, Tsarina Maria Feodorovna (מאריא טעאדאראוונא - Мария Фёдоровна) and the heir apparent (Tsarevich) and Grand Duke, Michael Alexandrovich (מיכאל אלכסדראוויטש-Михаи́л Алекса́ндрович). Grand Michael remained Tsarevich until the birth of Alexei Nikolaevich in 1904 to Nicholas II, thus dating this sign to the years between 1894 to 1904.

The use of the double-headed eagle (see Figure 2-18 in the centerfold), the imperial emblem both of the Russian and Hapsburg empires, in the public sphere of the synagogue, either painted on the wall or surmounting many brass chandeliers, can be interpreted both as a communal manifestation of Jewish allegiance and obedience to government of the day (Mellinkoff 1999: 33), but also of Jewish hermeneutic symbolism that depended and changed on circumstance, but usually related a representation of God through his crown of divine kingship (*Keter Malkhut* – כתר מלכות) (Khaimovich 2000: 133; Rodov 2004; Yaniv 2017: 79 n.9, 97-104; Kravtsov and Levin 2017: 82-83). However, I would contend that where additional attributes are in-

cluded, such as the crown, orb and scepter clutched heraldically in the eagle's talons, there can be no confusion that the intention was to demonstrate national loyalty, especially when displayed adjacent to the *Hanoten Teshua'* prayer. Notably, both here and in the synagogue in Wołpa in Belarus (Rodov 2004: 86, fig. 8, 122), the cross surmounting the crown and orb is omitted in order to avoid an obvious Christian symbol inside the synagogue. Both the imperial eagle and the prayer complied with the dictum known 'as the law of the kingdom is the law (דינא דמלכותא דינא), a rabbinic ruling that regulated the lives of Diaspora Jewish communities and individuals, subjecting religious law (Halakha) to the framework of the secular state law of any specific place. Given Jewish communities often volatile, unpredictable and complex relationship with aristocratic rulers, the prayer itself was not only a supplication for mercy, stability, peace and good government that would be and would remain favorable towards the Jewish community, but also a statement of modern citizenship and national loyalty (Katz 1961: 51; Schwartz 1986).



Figure 2-19 - Slate plaque from the Zarech'e Kloyz (Credit: Jon Seligman).

During the repair of the property pieces of an inscribed stone plaque, probably of slate, was revealed (Figure 2-19). Now presented in a decorative water basin in the stairwell of the house, the plaque measures around 70 x 60 centimeters. The carving is professional and the figures well represented, within the framework of Jewish folk art, indeed very similar in style and subject matter to many traditional *Shiviti* and *Mizraḥ* papercuts found in eastern Europe, raising the possibility that the plaque was even copied from this traditional artform (Frankel 1983).

At the center of the design, inside a surround of intertwined cord with flowers, is an *Aron Kodesh* (Torah Ark), set between two stylized columns which support an arch. At the base of each column is a flowerpot, alluding to the Tree of Life (Prov. 3:18). Similarly, the columns are decorated with vine of leaves and flowers which spiral around them.

In the four corners of the plaque are the four animals from chapter 5:20 of the 'Ethics of the Fathers' (*Pirkei Avot*) [18], the leopard, eagle, deer and lion, the traits of which embody much interpreted metaphors for human virtues required for religious piety. Beneath each animal, of which the eagle is missing, its description from *Pirkei Avot* is quoted, 'brazen like the leopard' (עז כנמר), the lost 'light like the eagle' (קל כנשר), 'swift like the deer' (רץ כצבי), 'and mighty like the lion' (וגבור כארי). The animals are shown in profile, facing towards the center of the plaque. Representation of the four animals is common theme in Jewish art both in Lithuania (Niunkaitė Račiūnienė 2011: 303-305) and around Europe (Rodov 2016: 13; Kravtsov and Levin 2017: 91-92) and is found in sculpture, painting, on scrolls, religious items, papercuts, printed in books and on wall inscriptions of at least eight synagogues in eastern Europe[19].

At the base, between the lion and the deer, is the prayer for deliverance from danger or sickness, known as *Birkat HaGomel* (ברכת הגומל) which is often recited prior to the reading of the Torah:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַגּוֹמֵל לְחַיָּבִים טוֹבוֹת, שֶׁגְּמָלַנִי כָּל טוּב

(Blessed are You, Lord our God, ruler of the world, who rewards the undeserving with goodness, and who has rewarded me with goodness.)

---

[18] Judah ben Teima used to say: Be brazen like the leopard, light like the eagle, swift like the deer, and mighty like the lion to do the Will of your Father Who is in Heaven. (Pirkei Avot 5:20).

יְהוּדָה בֶן תֵּימָא אוֹמֵר, הֱוֵי עַז כַּנָּמֵר, וְקַל כַּנֶּשֶׁר, וְרָץ כַּצְּבִי, וְגִבּוֹר כָּאַרְי, לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן אָבִיךָ שֶׁבַּשָּׁמַיִם (פרקי אבות ה':כ)

[19] You can find the long list of representations of the four animals from chapter 5:20 of the 'Ethics of the Fathers' (Pirkei Avot) on this website: https://cja.huji.ac.il/sch/browser.php?mode=info&f=subject&id=56 and also Shadmi 2011: 109, 274.

Given the use of the prayer, as a benediction of gratitude for some traumatic life event, this plaque may have been donated by, or given in memory of, a certain Arieh Leib ben Moshe whose inscribed name appears at least twice. Inscriptions of *Birkat HaGomel* in eastern European synagogues are unusual, Shadmi noting only two examples from the same synagogue in Boskovice in Moravia (Shadmi 2011: 84, 266).

On the first level, above the prayer, two rampant lions face either side of a closed Torah scroll capped with a crown. A Star of David and the letters כ"ת, the abbreviation for *Keter Torah*, the Crown of the Torah, decorate the mantle. A banner between the lions contains the name of the donor, Arieh Leib ben Moshe (אריה לייב בן משה). The first two letters prove difficult to decipher and the name finishes with the abbreviation לפ"ק [20] which always follows a date. This likely indicates that gematria of all or part of the name can be transformed to the year of the donation. On the second level, two flanking winged rampant lions face away from the crowned tablets of the law inscribed with the first two words of each of the Ten Commandments.

The partial words on the arch above the Ten Commandments read 'in memory in the sanctuary of the lord' (לזכרון בהיכל השם), flanked on the right with the word 'in the year' (בשנת). Unfortunately, the corresponding year on the left side of the inscription is broken and missing. In a cartouche above the arch, the name of the donor is repeated, together with the phrase 'to annual memory' (לזכרון תור השנה).

Across the Jewish world, inscriptions, plaques and signs were commonly placed in synagogues for personal memorials (*Yahrzeit*); donation to charity (*Tzedaka*), community organizations such as the *Ḥevra Kadisha* (burial society), *Talmud Torah* (education), hospitals etc., or to the synagogue itself and as a reminder of common prayers, especially on the *Bimah* (Bányai and Komoróczy 2020; Shadmi 2011: 136-140). A vast array of texts and visual representations of temple vessels, animals and other items were painted on the walls of eastern European synagogues from the 17th century. More importantly these demonstrated liturgical requirements and biblical texts commonly used in synagogue prayer, but also provided space for symbolic motifs and even expression of attachment to the emerging national identities. The three wall paintings and the plaque from the Zarech'e *Kloyz* are a demonstration, side-by-side, of all three.

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[20] לפ"ק is an abbreviation for לפרט קטן (literally of small specification), is used to specify the last three digits of a year in the sixth millennium of the Hebrew calendar.

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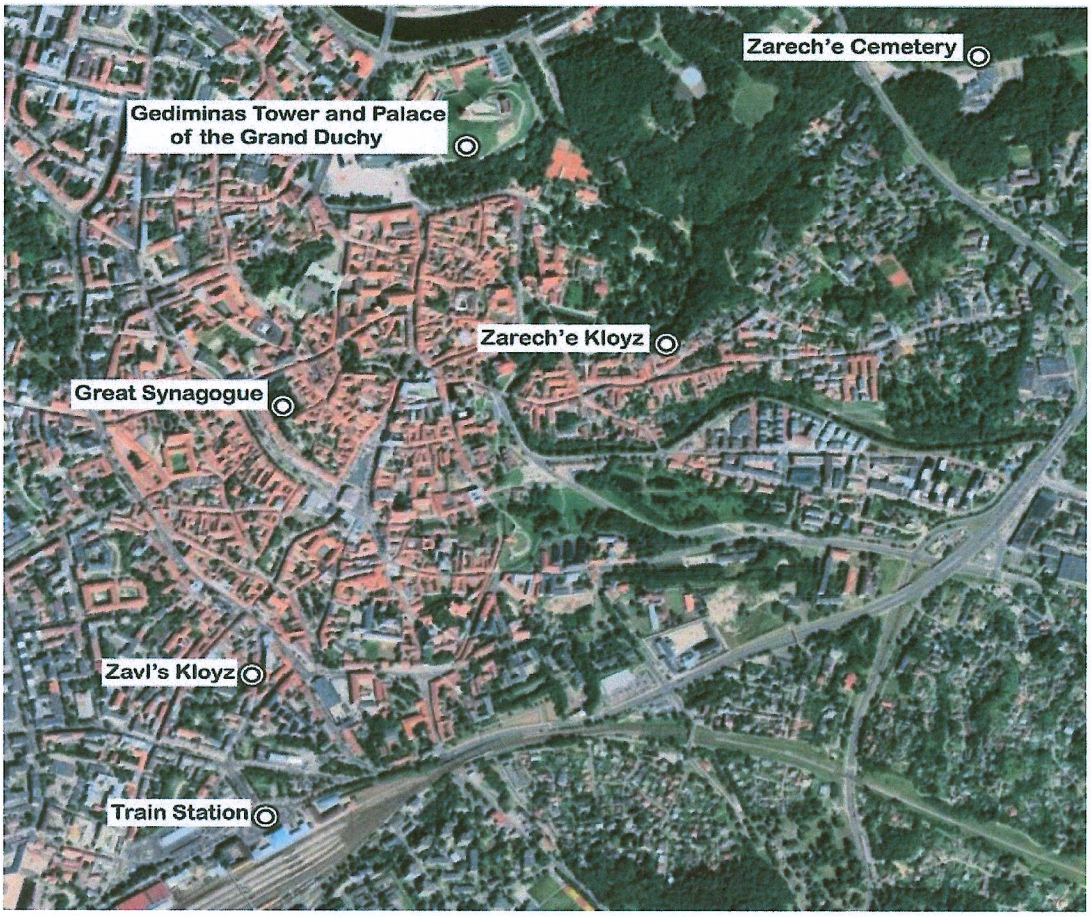


Figure 2-1 - Map of Vilnius (Vilna) (Credit: Google Earth, CNES/Airbus, Maxar).

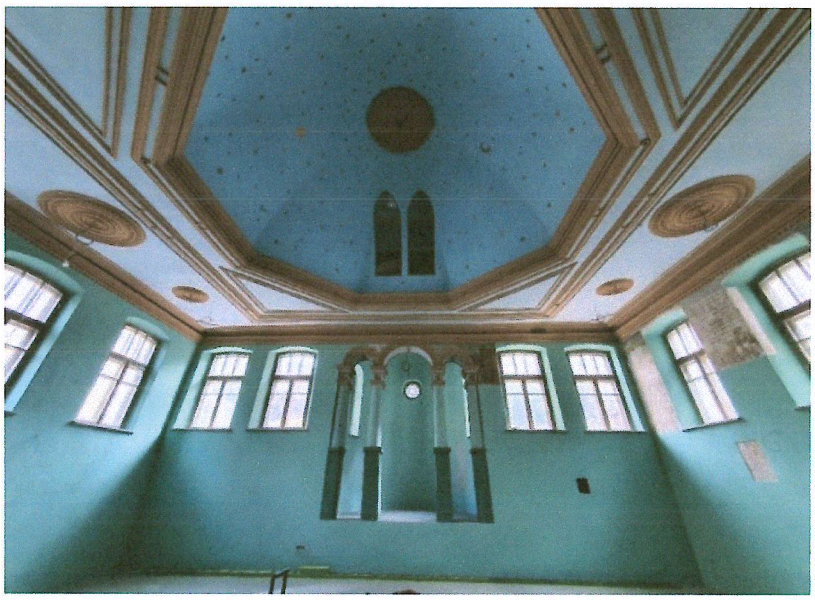


Figure 2-4 - Interior of Zavl's *Kloyz* after restoration, facing the Aron Kodesh with the painted prayer on the right (Credit: Jon Seligman).

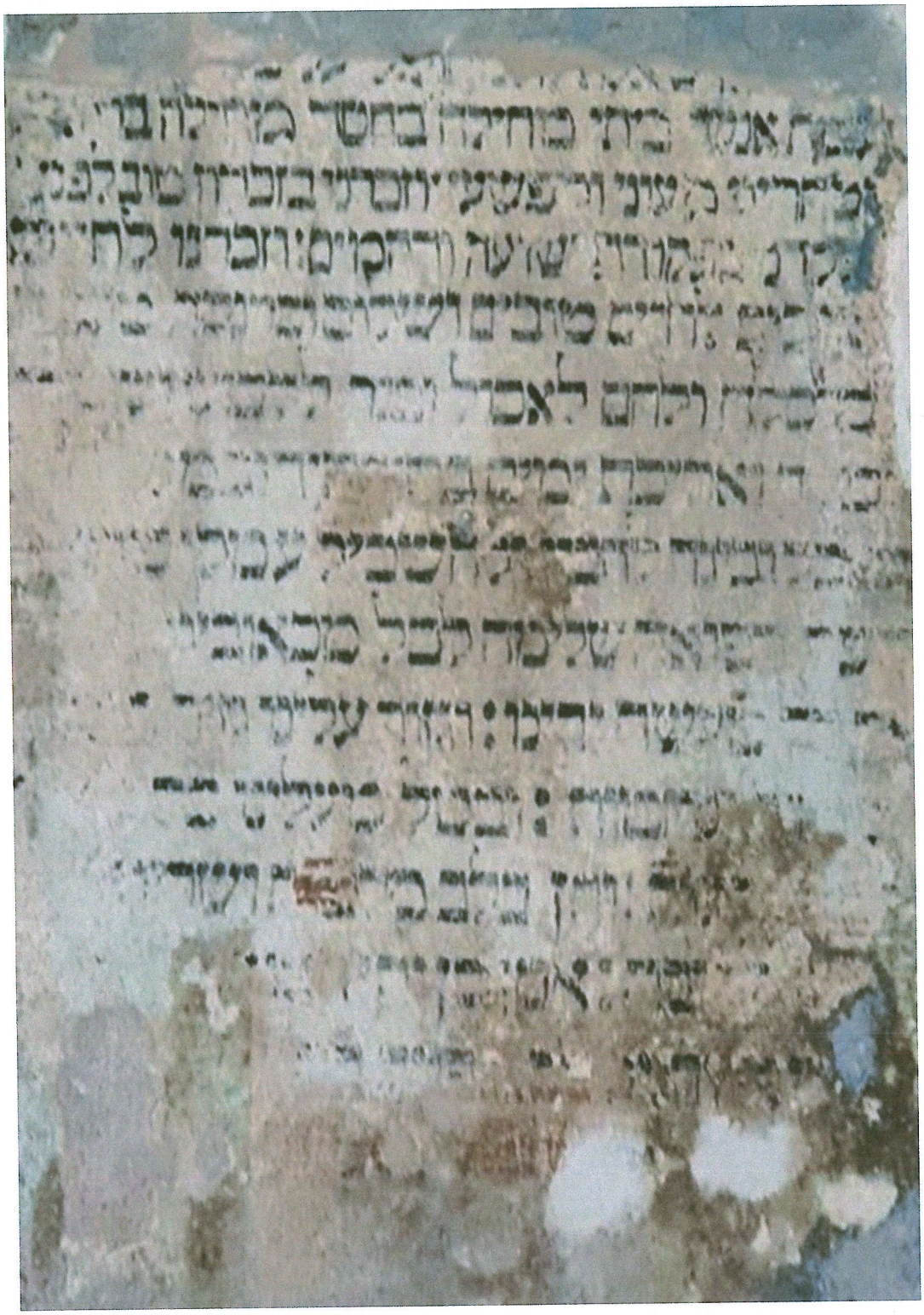


Figure 2-5 – Prayer recited during the taking out of the Torah scrolls from the Aron Kodesh (Ark) on Yom Kippur (Credit: Jon Seligman).



Figure 2-6 (top) – The seal of the Beth Midrash of Zavl's *Kloyz*, and Figure 2-7 (bottom) - Reversal of the seal from the Beth Midrash of Zavl's *Kloyz* (Credit for both: Andrius Šležas, Kultūros vertybių paieška).



Figure 2-12 – The wall paintings on the wall of the prayer hall of the Zarech'e *Kloyz* (Credit: Jon Seligman).

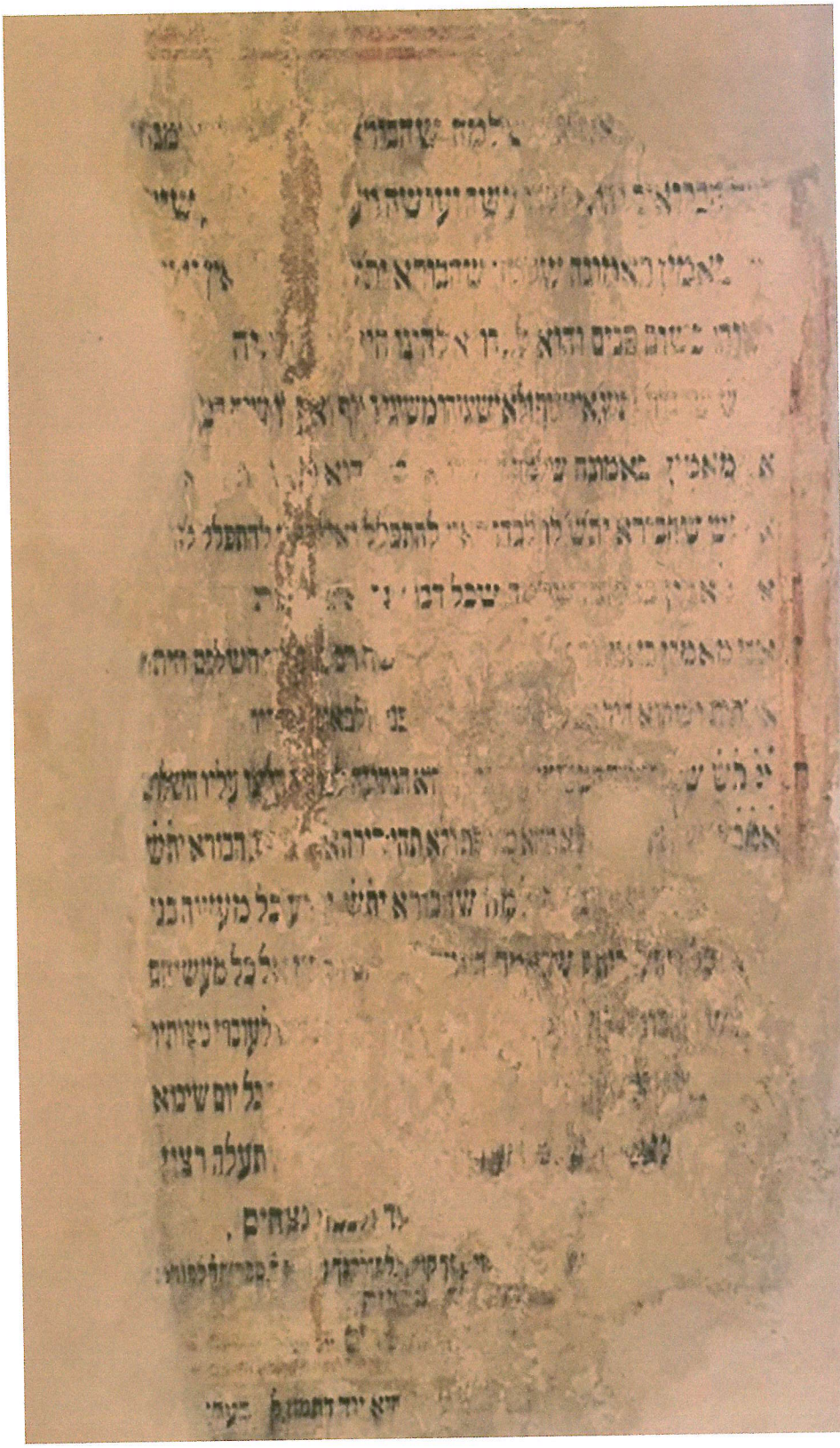


Figure 2-13 – Maimonides' Thirteen Tenets of (Jewish) Faith' (Credit: Jon Seligman).



Figure 2-14 – The painted Menorah on the wall of the Zarech'e *Kloyz* (Credit: Jon Seligman).



Figure 2-15 – Wall painting of the as *Hanoten Teshua'* prayer and eagle (Credit: Jon Seligman).



Figure 2-18 – Detail of the double-headed eagle above the Hanoten Teshua' prayer (Credit: Jon Seligman).

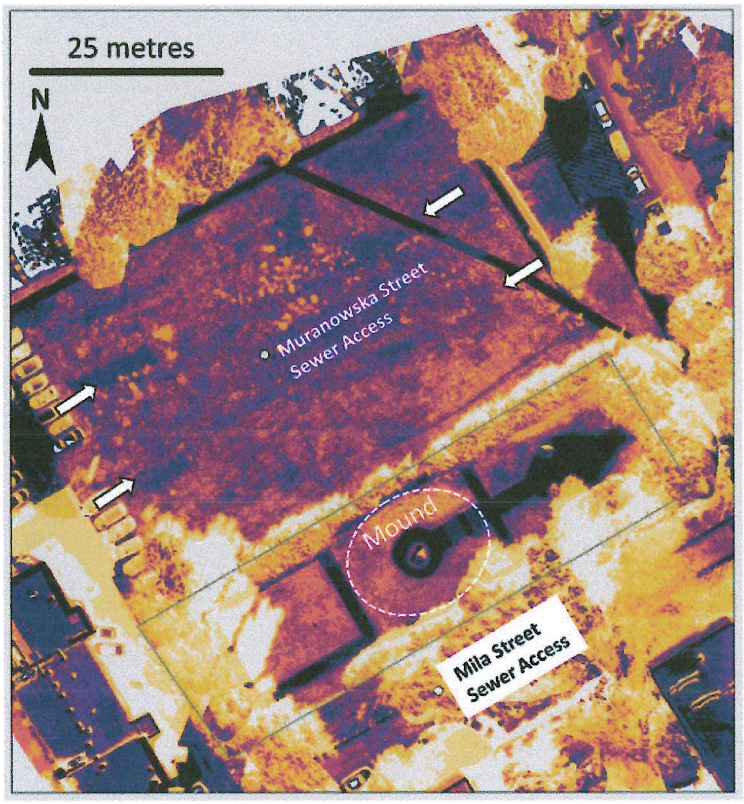


Figure 6-4 – Drone Image of Mila 18 memorial in Warsaw and adjacent park. White arrows point to features coincident with edges of former Muranowska Street. White circles indicate access covers for the pre-war sewer canals. Gray line with ticks delineates the fence surrounding the rectangular area of the present-day memorial site.

RICHARD FREUND'S LEGACY OF IDEAS, RESEARCH AND TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST



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